

A story is told of a young married couple who felt they were finally beginning to experience some of life's rewards. He had gotten a nice promotion with his firm, and she had their first baby while on paid maternity leave. The two events prompted them to move to the suburbs, purchasing a much needed, spacious, upscale home.

To celebrate their good fortune, they hosted their first holiday party and invited all of their friends. He looked forward to conducting a tour of the new house, and she was even more eager to "show off" their beautiful baby!

He greeted their guests, one after the other, that frosty evening, as they stepped in to the entryway shedding their winter overcoats. He hadn't planned for so many garments and had no place to put them. Quickly he decided to lay them on the bed in the guest room not far from the front door. In haste, not bothering to turn on the light, coat after coat was tossed onto the bed until the last couple had arrived. The party was now in full swing when one of the ladies exclaimed, "...Now just when are you going to show us that new baby, we've been hearing so much about?" "...Oh, my yes!, the young mother replied with delight....He's in the bassinette, on the bed, in the guest room!" The look of panic on her

husband's stricken face told the story. **The baby had been smothered by layer after layer of every outer covering imaginable.** (pause)

A Christmas tragedy, no doubt, and if true,...one of the saddest ever told. The story of a forgotten baby, once intended to be the very focus of the celebration.

I'm afraid Christmas in America, and all around the world, has become no less a tragedy. **In the midst of the celebration, the baby Jesus is all but forgotten....smothered by layer after layer of vain worldly distractions.**

One of the heaviest garments to obscure the message of the Christ child is **commercialism**. From mass media advertising to the big box stores, from the .com internet shopping blitz to the local retailers, Christmas has been reduced to a frenzied tug of war over the consumer's cash and credit! Black Friday starts in September now, and doesn't stop until the **'after Christmas sale'** shelving is emptied,...leaving very little time for Jesus.

The **political wars** have become another distraction from the true Jesus. Arguing over crosses and nativity scenes, banning Christmas carols from the classroom or even saying "Merry Christmas"... has become a national pastime. We call it "the war on

Christmas"! But the the defenders of Christmas can't seem to quite remember exactly why it's so important!

**Mythology** has always been a popular means to cover up the Christ child. A chimney creeping, jolly and bearded, oversized elf, with god-like powers of omniscience and benevolence, his flying reindeer, snowmen coming to life, frozen animated characters, scrooges and ghosts and evil grinchies....all compete with the birth of Jesus for every child's belief and affection.

Adults often have their own garments to smother the baby, born in a manger....with raucous office parties, where for many, good cheer comes in a liquor bottle and every **self indulgent behavior** is tolerated....after all it's Christmas!

Certainly the most subtle and probably the most insidious diversion from the true message of Christmas is the ever present **sentamentalism** that blankets the season. This holiday overcoat just "sugar coats" the season with a feel good emotional appeal. Christmas cards, sentamental letters and e-mails, benevolent greetings,...often insincere,... and well crafted appeals to **give** to the under-privileged, ..."especially this Holiday season!" ...after all, "that's the true meaning of Christmas!"

My friends, I'm afraid all of the well wishing and good cheer, gift giving and philanthropy will never express the true meaning of Christmas.

**So who is this forgotten baby? And why did he come to earth?** In Hebrews chapter 10 verse 5 we're invited to hear the divine farewell conversation exchanged between God the Father and God the Son on the very first Christmas Eve! **Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:**

**“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,  
But a body You have prepared for Me.**

**6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin  
You had no pleasure.**

**7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—  
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—  
To do Your will, O God.’”<sup>[a]</sup>**

This baby of Bethlehem, born of a miraculous virgin birth, and laid in humble manger, was none other than the Son of God, the King of Glory! In the greatest mystery in the history of all time and eternity, God became a man!...Immanuel, ‘God with us’,...and dwelt among men! **But why did the sovereign creator of the universe come to earth?**

Jesus Himself answers that in this passage. He bid farewell to His Father and began a journey that was to end 33 years later on a cross....and then through resurrection, to be glorified, and exalted, and restored back into heaven, to the glory that He knew before He came. **He came to die!**

Those pink little hands, formed by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, were made in order that spikes might be driven through them. Those precious little feet would one day carry the suffering Savior up a hill to be nailed to a cross. That sweet little head, with sparkling eyes and eager mouth was fashioned, in order to have brutal men force a crown of thorns upon it. That tender little body, all soft and warm, wrapped in swaddling clothes would one day be ripped open by a spear to reveal a broken heart...and that's exactly why God prepared that infant body. **Jesus was born to die!**

**Why did Jesus have to die?** Because God is righteous...and perfectly holy. He is light and in Him there is no darkness! You say, that's good news,...but that's bad news for us...because we are born sinful and separated from a righteous God. God's own holy nature requires that He punish every sin,... **and that leaves us in peril of eternal hell.**

Yet, God is also a loving Savior! And He has provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sins, declared righteous, and reconciled to Him and to receive all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies! That way is the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf, the only possible substitute that can take our place and appease the wrath of God against sin.

II Corinthians 5:21 says: “**For, He** (that is God), **made Him who knew no sin**, (that is Jesus, who lived a perfectly sinless life), **to be sin for us**, (that is, all those who believe), **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!**”

The only possible sacrifice, that could be effectively offered to atone for our sin must be human. The blood of bulls and goats as burnt offerings could not satisfy. For it was human sin to be atoned for,...and the sacrifice must be perfect, without blemish, because of the righteous demands of a perfectly holy God! That narrows the field considerably! **There was only one perfect human being that ever lived....and he came to die,... for exactly that purpose,... that very same, often forgotten, baby Jesus,...the Christ, the Son of the living God!**

Friends, here is God's offer of salvation... We like to call it the "miracle of trading places." **God will look upon Christ as if He had lived your sinful life, and God will look upon you, as if you had lived Jesus' own sinless life on earth.** I don't know if Jesus died on the cross in your place,...only you can make your calling and election sure. Only you can examine yourself and see if you be in the faith. But I do know that whoever comes to Jesus Christ, acknowledging their sin and need for a Savior,... with genuine repentance in their heart,... believing in Christ as the Son of God... and putting their faith in His death on the cross....He will in no way cast them out! But friends, that requires humility...owning up to your own sinfulness, and calling upon Jesus and His grace alone for your salvation!

**A true celebration of Christmas must honor the greatest of divine accomplishments. It recognizes that the eternal, sovereign God came to earth as a human being to live a righteous life among His people and then to die as a perfect sacrifice to deliver from the wrath of God all who repent and believe.**

You may choose to leave here tonight, having met some new friends, having enjoyed a wonderful dinner, some beautiful music and you may have had some great conversations around the table....yet still not believing that Jesus is God, and that He came to die for your sins. If that is the case, there is only one question that I would leave you with to answer....If not God...who was He? And if He wasn't meant to die, why was He crucified? And if He didn't conquer death, why did He rise from the grave and ascend back into heaven as history records? (pause)

I'll leave you with an old Christmas poem. Though I don't know the source,... I share it with you from my heart.

Who art Thou precious little babe? Nestled in  
the hay,

**God I am,... come to earth this day.**

Why didst Thou come, sweet little babe  
nestled in the hay?

**To die I came,... the price of sin to pay.**

Who's sin,.. tender little babe nestled in the  
hay?

**Yours it was,... that brought me down  
today.**